



Published by the **GEORGIA GAME & FISH COMMISSION**

April Issue

Game and Fish Legislation Meets With Opposite Fates

For the second year in a row, efforts by Georgia wildlife conservationists to increase the price of the State's hunting and fishing licenses have failed.

House Bill 384, the license increase bill, came just 14 votes short of the constitutional majority of 103 needed to pass the bill, with 89 votes in favor of the bill, 66 against, and 50 either not voting or not present. On a second effort to reconsider the measure, the bill was tabled, and efforts to bring it up a third time were halted shortly before the Assembly adjourned for the year. The bill earlier had suffered several crippling amendments which would have severely cut the amount of money it would have raised for the Game and Fish Department.

"I feel that we could have passed some type of license increase at this past session," said James Darby of Vidalia, chairman of the State Game and Fish Commission, "but because this was a controversial issue and the bill had been crippled by numerous amendments late in the session, we decided it would be better to wait until next year."

Darby said he has been assured by Governor Sanders that he will back the license increase bill as an administration measure next year and will give it his full administration support in the General Assembly. "With Governor Sanders' help, I am sure we can get this vital legislation passed without any difficulty next year," Darby said.

He pointed out that since the Game and Fish Department will not receive the \$900,000 a year increase it asked for, the Department will not be able to build 40 launching ramps for fishermen on Georgia streams, establish 16 new public hunting and fishing areas, hire 14 biologists, or begin a marine coastal fisheries program.



Sanders



Darby

Landowner Liability

Darby did praise members of the General Assembly for passing a companion measure of the license bill which limits the liability of landowners for injuries suffered by persons allowed to hunt or fish on their lands at no charge.

"This is a progressive piece of legislation which will protect landowners who have already leased land to the Game and Fish Department while making it easier for us to acquire new areas in the future when funds become available to operate them," Darby said. However, he noted that the primary advantage of the new law will be to encourage landowners to allow hunting and fishing on their lands, rather than going to the trouble of posting them to avoid the possibility of a liability damage suit for injuries a hunter might suffer on his land. Darby said that copies of the liability law are available for interested landowners from the office of the State Game and Fish Commission at the State Capitol.

Along this same line, a bill was also passed by the Assembly this year authorizing use of convict labor to fill in abandoned wells on private or public property with the permission of the landowner when the existence of the hazardous open well or hole is called to the attention of the county Civil Defense Director.

In other action, both houses passed a measure giving a free honorary fishing license to disabled veterans. A similar measure was passed last year giving a free fishing license to blind persons, in addition to the free honorary hunting and fishing license now issued to persons over 65 years of age.

A soil conservation measure passed by the Assembly will require the State Highway Department to include provisions for sowing vegetation on all banks, fills, and cuts in contracts for future road projects.

Two measures passed of interest to boaters will extend the expiration of motorboat registrations until April 1st, rather than December 31st at the end of the three year period, and will provide that boat trailers under 2,500 pounds in weight need not be equipped with separate braking systems.



The scrappy white bass is one of the best fishing bets for April action while on his spawning run.

April Best Month For White Bass

The State Game and Fish Commission reports that April is the best month for white bass.

Eleven years ago there were no white bass in Georgia. Today thousands of anglers proclaim that it is one of the top game fish in the state.

The Georgia Game and Fish Commission introduced the non-native white bass to Georgia lakes beginning in 1954. Since the initial stocking which was made on Lake Allatoona, the Commission has continued its stocking program which has established white bass in every major impoundment in Georgia.

Detail studies by biologists following the introduction have shown that the fishermen's best chance of catching white bass is during the month of April, when the fish begin their spawning run out of the lake into the feeder streams. The prime fishing spots during this run are located where the streams meet the back water of the lake and for a short distance upstream. Catches of white bass have been made as far up the rivers as ten miles.

The best April runs of white bass, according to Commission biologists' reports and yearly catch reports, can be found in the following locations on major impoundments:

Lake Lanier, Chattahoochee River, and Chestatee River; Lake Allatoona, Etowah River; Clark Hill, Savannah River, and Broad River and Little River Bridge; Lake Sinclair, Little River and Oconee River; Bartlett's Ferry, Chattahoochee River; Goat Rock, behind Bartlett's Ferry Dam; Flint River behind Lake Worth Dam; Lake Blackshear; Coosa River, below Rome.

Experienced anglers report that white bass are most frequently caught using white and yellow jigs, spinners,

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"Trophy Trout" Stream On Chattahoochee River

Creation of a new "Trophy Trout Stream" on a 20-mile stretch of the Chattahoochee River below Buford Dam to the Old Jones Bridge is the most interesting change in the Georgia trout fishing regulations which began April 1st this year.

According to the State Game and Fish Commission, fishermen in this section of the river are limited to artificial lure only coupled with a 10-inch limit on trout taken in that portion of the river. From the Old Jones Bridge downstream 11 miles to the Roswell Road Bridge, there is no restriction to artificial lures or size limit, as was the case last year.

The new regulations on the Chattahoochee below Lake Lanier are designed to insure that larger trout will be available in the river which are capable of feeding on two to three inch shad and other small fish which are killed in the Buford Dam turbines and flushed downstream all through the year. During the winter, this relatively large size food is the primary source of nutrition available to trout in the river, and trout which are too small to swallow these handy morsels are doomed to starvation in the midst of plenty.

Biologists of the Game and Fish Department say the ban on the use of live or natural bait in this section of the river goes hand-in-hand with the 10-inch size limit, which is designed to

maintain the population of larger trout. Fish hooked by the use of worms, corn, and other natural baits are usually swallowed by trout, making removal of the hook almost impossible without killing the fish. On the other hand, research studies indicate that 90 per cent of the fish hooked on an artificial lure can be successfully released back into the stream unharmed, regardless of whether or not a barbed hook is used.

No Reproduction

Although trout grow faster in the Chattahoochee below the Dam than in any other trout stream in Georgia, biologists say they can find no evidence of successful trout reproduction in the River, evidently because of the great mass of shifting sand on the river bottom which buries trout eggs, preventing them from hatching. As a result, the Game and Fish Department must stock the stream to insure trout survival there with fishing pressure.

The Department says fishing last year in the river was poor, apparently due to the unusually high discharges

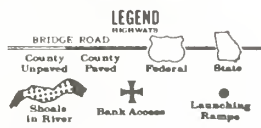


Pretty Beverly Burdette holds trophy trout. This 23 inch, 5½ pound rainbow trout was trapped in Chattahoochee River.

from Lake Lanier all last spring, flushing trout downstream. In addition, trout stocked in the river the previous fall had only reached six inches in growth at the time of release compared to the nine inches biologists say is necessary to eat shad during the winter months.

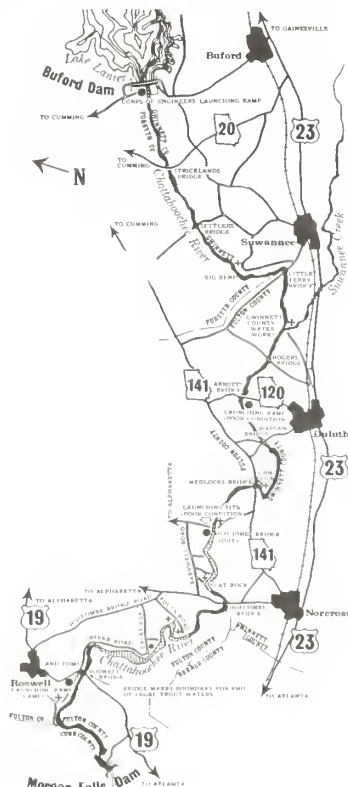
Stocking efforts this past fall were more successful, with some 26,000 trout nine inches or longer being placed in the river during the closed season, which opened April 1st through September 15th. After spending the winter months growing out, these trout should generally run about 12 inches or more in length, although some trout from previous stockings were discovered by biologists this winter in the river going up to five pounds in weight. Although these fish were raised in a hatchery, they are now well-acclimated to the river and have taken on all the characteristics and color of stream-reared rainbows.

Chattahoochee River from Buford Dam to Morgan Falls Dam



Distances From Buford Dam Downstream:
(in miles)

Strickland Bridge 23
Settlers Bridge 44
Little Ferry Bridge 81
Rogers Bridge 120
Abbott's Bridge 137
Warsaw Bridge 153
Medlocks Bridge 182
Old Jones Bridge 202
(End of 10-inch size limit
and artificial lure restriction)
Holcombe Bridge 235
Roswell Bridge 316
(End of legal trout water)
Morgan Falls Dam 362
Bank fishing access at all bridges
Best fishing is on low water. Discharges
from the dam travel downstream at ap-
proximately 2 to 3 miles per hour. To find
out what the current discharge schedule
is, call the Corps of Engineers Buford
office (Atlanta exchange). Normally, there
are no discharges on Saturday and Sunday



Wildlife In Georgia

(SECOND IN A SERIES)

WHITE BASS

White bass (*Lepibema chrysops*) are a comparatively new fish in Georgia. They were not present until 1954 when Game and Fish Department fishery biologists released them in some of the state's larger impoundments.

Unlike black bass, the white bass is a true member of the bass family, and is allied to some of the salt water basses. It is identified by the unbroken black lines along its silvery sides.

White bass travel in schools and groups of them are often seen chasing schools of small minnows in some of the state's larger waters.

Life Cycle

White bass become very popular during their annual spawning runs, which is usually in mid-spring. During these trips up rivers or creeks to spawn, the fish are easily caught by anglers. Female white bass usually deposit 500,000 eggs over gravelly or rocky bottoms. She then deserts them and returns to her home in the lake.

Food

Diet of the white bass consists of insects, forage fish, such as threadfin shad, yellow perch and minnows, frogs and snails.



Game and Fish Department biologists were asked to remove a number of underfed deer congregating around Stephen Foster State Park on the edge of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.



Biologist Charlie Marshall of the University of Georgia's School of Veterinary Medicine mixes a powdered tranquilizer with cut apples in an effort to catch the deer quickly.



After frantic struggles with game biologists in the Okefenokee palmettos, the reluctant deer are firmly tied and loaded into a Department truck to "sleep it off" before being restacked.

100 DEER RELEASED

Annual Deer Stocking Program Completed by G&F Commission

The State Game and Fish Commission has completed its annual deer stocking program by releasing more than 100 deer in eight Georgia counties.

This year's release brings the total number of deer stocked by the Commission in the last five years to more than 1100, which were distributed among suitable stocking sites in some 50 Georgia counties which presently have no deer season.

Releases this year consisted of approximately 10 to 15 deer each in Bartow, Chattooga, Coffee, Laurens, Pike, Twiggs, Walker, and Whitfield counties. Deer were stocked only in the closed portion of Bartow, part of which has its first deer season this year.

In so far as possible, releases were made only on areas which had been selected by game biologists of the Commission after careful investigation to determine the area's existing deer population and suitability of its habitat, including food and cover conditions.

"One of the most important things in making sure that deer will succeed in a new area is to protect them from dogs," said Hubert Handy, game management coordinator of the Game and Fish Commission, who pointed out that free-running dogs kill more deer in Georgia every year, especially in the late spring and early summer, when present does or young fawns are especially vulnerable to dogs.

Texas Deer

64 of the deer released this year were purchased by the Commission from the

State of Texas, where they were box trapped on the King Ranch. The balance were trapped with the aid of a tranquilizer-dart gun on Ossabow and Jekyll Islands, and by the use of drugged apples in the Okefenokee Swamp. Of the 1,100 deer stocked in the last five years, approximately 600 were purchased from Texas, and 300 were bought from Wisconsin. With 20 years of deer trapping experience behind them, game biologists of the Commission have found that it is more economical and efficient to purchase deer in states which have an over abundance than it is to trap them inside Georgia, since the state has few large concentrations of deer that can be caught as economically as deer can be purchased at approximately \$35.00 per head. Trapping even a small number of deer often ties up a large number of men for a month or more.

Under federal aid requirements for stocking deer, each of the counties or portions of counties where deer are stocked must remain closed to hunters for at least five years to allow the herd to multiply to a huntable population.

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small spoons, and live minnows fished on the bottom.

The Game and Fish Commission also reports that crappie fishing is very good in all Georgia lakes. Bass fishing continues to be good on Lake Seminole and Fort Gaines, and it should begin to pick up in late April on all the lakes located in Middle and North Georgia.



Dart gun inventor Jack Crackford, now an assistant director of the Game and Fish Department, demonstrated that he hasn't lost his shooting skill by capturing three Jekyll Island deer.



This truckload of Texas deer is ready to leap far freedom in a new Georgia home. Bucks in the group either have already lost their antlers or had them sawed off to protect the other deer.

EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM

Commission Stocks 11,000 Rainbow Trout at Lake Lanier

Don't be surprised if you land a trout in Lake Lanier this spring!

The explanation is simple. The State Game and Fish Commission in an experimental program has stocked 11,000 rainbow trout in the huge North Georgia lake.

The introduction of trout in Lake Lanier which took place in late December was not announced at that time in order to relieve the young trout of heavy fishing pressure.

The Lanier stocking climaxed five years of investigation by the Commission of the suitability of the lake for trout. The results of this investigation indicate that the temperature level and oxygen supply needed for trout to survive now exists at Lake Lanier.

Leon Kirkland, Fisheries Coordinator for the Commission, explains that since trout exist at a deeper level than other game species such as bass and crappie, the present fish population in the lake will not be affected. Kirkland says that other lakes in the state, such as Hartwell, Allatoona, and Clark Hill, have been studied for possible trout stocking, but results indicate that the needed environment for trout existence are not present in these impoundments.

The rainbows stocked at Lake Lanier ranged in size from 8 to 12 inches. These trout were obtained as excess fingerlings from the Federal Government and were reared at the state's Summerville trout hatchery. A new method of trout production at the hatchery resulted in additional trout for use in the Lake Lanier program, as well as for an increased amount of trout to be used in stocking North Georgia streams.

Catches Reported

"There have already been some catches of trout made at Lanier since they were stocked" Kirkland said. "We examined some of these fish and found them to be in excellent condition. This leads us to believe that the experimental program will be successful." Kirkland noted that although the program looks promising so far, the most critical period for the trout will be in the early fall when the water temperature is the highest and dissolved oxygen in the water is the lowest. Kirkland says that it will take 3 to 4 years to fully evaluate the success of the program. At that time, if the trout have survived and a normal percentage of catches have been made, Kirkland adds that further stocking of trout in Lake Lanier may be justified.

Kirkland pointed out that this same type of trout program has been carried out effectively in similar lakes in Tennessee and Virginia, and has resulted in catches of trophy trout ranging up to 5 and 6 pounds.

The Game and Fish Commission has asked for the help of all sportsmen fishing in the Lake Lanier area, requesting that any small trout be released unharmed, and that any trout catches made on Lanier be reported to the Department office in Gainesville or Atlanta.



Douglas Hedden, biological aid for the State Game and Fish Commission, removes the rainbow trout from a state hatchery truck. Special equipment on the truck includes re-circulating devices and aeration equipment to add oxygen to the water in the tanks.



As the trout are released into the lake they immediately disperse. Some of these rainbows have been caught in varied areas of the impoundment. The unmistakable characteristics of the rainbow trout make it easy to identify.

STATE GAME & FISH COMMISSION
Public Information Division
401 State Capitol
Atlanta, Ga. 30334

GEORGIA OUTDOORS

Jim Morrison, *Editor*
Ronnie Abney, *Managing Editor*

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**Deer stocking;
"Trophy Trout" Stream.**

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